



Teen Court Appearing Before a True Jury of their Peers

“Being on the (Teen Court) panel is an excellent experience. Not only is it a good thing for college applications, it helps put people on the right track, like it helped me.”

About two-thirds of Wisconsin juveniles who get in trouble with the law are likely to become repeat offenders, back in juvenile court again before they become adults. In addition, studies have shown the powerful benefits both to youth and their communities when young people play meaningful community roles.

Extension’s Response

Extension youth agents and specialists helped create teen courts in 17 Wisconsin counties and provided information and education about teen courts in dozens of other communities. In teen court, high school- and middle school-aged young people hear cases of other juveniles cited for first time misdemeanors such as shoplifting or vandalism. Where traditional juvenile courts might simply impose a small fine, teen courts are empowered to “sentence” offenders to perform community service, attend classes relevant to their offenses, or write letters of apology to the people they have wronged.

Outcomes

In the state of Wisconsin an average of only 4 percent of young people who appear in Teen Court become repeat offenders. About two-thirds of teens who appear in traditional juvenile courts are cited for subsequent offenses. In the average county with a Teen Court, young offenders performed community service valued at a total of \$4,500.

41 teen courts are at work in Wisconsin communities, with more forming every year. 1,100 teen courts exist in the U.S.

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March 2006+